

## **I Rise**

**By Alexa Taylor Sharpe**

My paralyzed body,  
Bolted to the bleak bedframe beneath me.  
The only movement in the muted bedroom is the stagnant flutter of my weighted eyelids.  
My chest is constricted,  
Inhibiting my inhalations.  
I pray for the power to be the pilot of my own plane.  
I want to sail in the direction of the unclouded vault of Heaven,  
But my brain is burning,  
Like the sea of flames below the ground in Hell.  
My eyes shut,  
For it is time to hush the hastening thoughts,  
Because now something else is on its way.  
I wake and I rise,  
for now, I am bulletproof.  
I ascend from my bedroom window to the rooftop.  
I fear nothing as I jump,  
Plummeting downwards,  
Anticipating the fall,  
For I know I dominate over the powerless concrete below my feet.  
The mania is an astounding adventure,  
and she is a close acquaintance,  
while depression is a foe.  
He is longing for my downfall,  
And is skilled in shattering my sustenance.  
The highs and the lows  
They fluctuate rapidly,  
And I am left with ambiguity.  
I step outside to light a cigarette,  
For I am only slowly killing myself.  
I stop for a moment to look toward the pale blue sky,  
And I come to an unforeseen realization;  
I am a living, breathing being,  
And I can pilot my own plane,  
And I can soar toward the heavens.  
I am suited to maneuver myself through the dark,  
And I am capable of moving through the air,  
To locate peace of mind,  
And I will no longer be languishing for freedom.  
I can fly.  
I will fly.

## **The Rebirth of the Phoenix**

**By Tarrin Morgan II**

For 30 years of my life I have been afraid of heights.  
However, that changed on one of my darkest nights.  
I remember crying on that couch with a plan to end it all.  
I was tired of being lied to,  
exhausted from attempting to pour from a cup that was rusted through,  
and was begging God for a sign that there are bright days ahead.  
She responded,  
“Yes, but first you must take flight.  
The sky is not the limit, it is just the view.  
You are meant to soar and make an impact on the world.  
Your fiery passion has the power to warm the coldest hearts.  
Your wings gracefully flow in a humble way that inspires hope  
in the most pessimistic of individuals.  
You were born with a calling that you will soon fulfill.  
You are a Phoenix but over the years you forgot.  
So, I had to put you through this journey to remind you.  
You are dead inside now but consider this your rebirth.  
Take flight my Phoenix because you are now ready for  
what I have been preparing you for.”

## **A Journey towards freedom**

### **By Megha Sood**

The mellifluous arch  
the shifting angle of my mighty wings,  
encumbered by the pain  
of broken dreams and desires  
a victory, which seems too hard to win.

You plucked my wings  
feather by feather,  
pulled out in pieces  
from the blades  
of my bloodied shoulder.

Your hands stained  
with my seraphic blood  
your face covered in that veritable smirk,  
my vapid soul throbs for freedom  
it feverishly deserves.

Hauling myself  
dragged under those patriarchal rules,  
the blind traditions and misogyny;  
choking and suffocating me for sure.

Unwavering,  
Unfettered  
drawn towards the gleaming truth,  
that snowy peak of the mountain  
is the sign of my salvation  
my untethered truth.

With a song clenched in my teeth  
and prayer under my bated breath  
I rise through the air  
like a phoenix from the ashes,  
doused with the freedom of unchained air  
filled with divine flashes.

My scars bear the map  
of those lost and trodden  
saved from the gallows,  
with the wisdom of the generation  
under my tenacious wings,  
I take the flight towards my destiny  
a journey, for millions to follow.

**Take the dare**  
**By Swati Ambole**

There are no stop signs in the air  
no red lights in the sky  
It all comes down unto your will  
Are you willing to fly?

no maps, no set directions  
Just the goal you're trying to land  
no detours no distractions  
Except those in your mind

the song that's waiting for a voice  
Or painting for canvas  
that idea whose time had come  
And is almost about to pass

those wings that you were born with  
that are waiting to be spread  
the feet eager to leave the ground  
but are planted deep instead

the heart long ready for the joy  
the lungs craving fresh air  
the equipment has been all set  
say yes and take the dare!

## Hope

By Kris Peterson

The day they placed you in my arms,  
That was the day I realized true love my son.  
Now that baby is grown.  
As you stand on the edge of the precipice, on the verge of manhood, I wonder.  
When you leap, will you spread your wings and fly?  
Or...  
will the demons that cloud your mind cause you to crumble to the ground?  
You were such a happy child  
You spread joy; so full of life  
You always found the good in everything  
...and then the darkness came.  
I grieve that child.  
He has been replaced by a young man with so many doubts  
This man does not believe he is enough  
He battles his mind daily, fighting for happiness  
He does not see a future, he cannot see the light  
My son is hopeless.  
As you struggle, I continue to hope  
I hope that one day you will see the person in the mirror that I see  
The compassionate, intelligent, and kind person  
You are loved, though you don't feel you deserve it  
You are needed, though you feel you have nothing to offer  
So know this my child...  
As you stand on the edge of the precipice,  
I will stand by you  
I will carry you until your wings are strong enough to carry yourself.  
For even though you are hopeless,  
I have hope  
I have hope enough for the both of us.

## **Survivor**

**By Karen Jung**

I've been pushed to the bottom of the sea  
By those who've claimed to have loved me  
But their words are laced with lies and deceit  
And dance in the hallways of my mind  
Like a wandering circus that mocks  
The reality of my remarkable Existence

Their Ignorance continues to deny the Truth  
That screams from my lips  
And cuts through the deepest cavities of my soul  
It is a miracle that my heart has not suffocated  
Under the pressure of putting up pretenses  
And pretending that the events of the Past  
Are just mundane memories of days gone by

But little do they care to know and understand  
That the Demons of my Past still creep into my Present  
And there are some days  
When I feel like a bystander to my own life  
Watching as I wither and crumble  
Under the weight of a world with little mercy  
For trauma survivors like me

But then I must remember  
That there are other days  
When I have the Voice and Courage  
To be the Woman Warrior  
Who wields her mighty weapons to avenge her Past  
And lends a helping hand  
To those who've traveled the same war-torn Path

So some people might say that I'm like Super Woman  
A superhero flying in and out of lives to "Save the Day"  
But I'm just a child  
Who grew up in a dark and lonely world  
And learned how to survive  
By trusting God and my intuition  
So don't expect me to surrender to the Villains  
That make it their life-long mission  
To challenge my livelihood every single day

## **A Need to Breathe**

### **By Patricia Urban Korsak**

Don't go, he said  
I'll be too anxious while you're in the air, he said  
I'm anxious about it now, he said.  
Then he broke down and cried.  
Making me second-guess myself.

I drove him to the hospital  
Where he stayed for 3 days.  
Not long enough.

Come get me, he said.  
I don't belong here, he said.  
I'm not like these people, he said.  
Then he lied  
Saying that he wasn't depressed,  
Nor was he an alcoholic.

He convinced them  
That he didn't belong there.  
He called me to pick him up.  
He raced out the door, saying he  
Had to leave before the doctor stopped him.  
Again, I questioned myself.

Was it me?  
Was it him?  
Was it his parents?  
Was it the demands of society?

Don't go, he said.  
I have to, I said.  
I need to, I said.  
What will I do without you?  
You will cope.

And I went.  
I flew over the ocean  
To the lands of my ancestors.  
I explored. I climbed. I wrote.  
I photographed. I learned.  
I smiled. I laughed. I relaxed.  
I breathed.

## **Taking Flight**

**By Laine Sutton Johnson**

The moonlight pierced my tears  
Telling me to let them fuel my journey.

The moon is wise.  
She knows I'm trying to escape—  
Go to her and wash away the pain  
without spilling it all over  
my heart and mind and soul.

I'm old now and haven't time.  
I want to fly like yesterdays  
when I would will myself away  
to sit inside my soothing moon  
and watch it all unfold.

It doesn't happen now.  
I'm flapping wings too bruised  
by disappointment—  
rushing arms too worn  
from carrying all their broken hearts.  
My legs won't spring like before  
with hopeless joints eroding.

Maybe I could close my eyes and make believe  
I could float to her in safety—  
finding a better way to fly...  
beyond definition—  
free from judgements, rules and condescending glares.

Flight is on my horizon.  
If only I could.

## **The Power Within Me**

**By Kelly Grayson**

I lean back to feel the sunshine on my face  
such a beautiful place...  
On top of a mountain, i see far and wide  
with grass beneath my feet and the wind at my side  
Silhouettes of branches overhead in my view  
swirling white clouds in a sky so big and blue  
There's a stream nearby, i can hear the sound  
there are leaves in the current floating around  
I wish i could join in with the birds in the sky  
they seem so carefree, how they soar, how they fly  
My troubles have a way of wearing me down  
so much so that my feet are planted firmly on the ground  
I imagine my troubles floating away in the air  
and leaving this mountain without even a care  
To be free of the sadness, anger and pain  
to sing with the music and dance in the rain  
And then it occurred to me that i have the will  
to sing and to dance whenever i feel  
I reach up with my hands, close my eyes, feel the breeze  
and feel like i am soaring above all the trees  
My troubles i send to the edge of the cliff  
and the wind takes them away with the breeze, they all lift  
I realized i have the ability, like the birds soaring free  
the power is within me...

**Untitled**  
**By Strawberry Gallagher**

My thoughts were always traveling 100 miles per hour  
as my moods were fluctuating at a mile a minute  
but despite that,  
through the turbulence and instability,  
I always reached my destination

It was hard to exist in a colony  
when all I knew  
was fear and doubt,  
never knowing what the next day entailed  
or knowing nurture from another,  
wondering why I was not worth sustaining

Expected to fail,  
the forecast alerted downfall  
My adversity did not lead to catastrophe  
but  
to the advancement of my existence

Stigma says my wings are defected but  
I could have never soared so high without them

Who knew that  
alcoholic pedigree  
and a lineage of mental illness,  
including my own,  
could pave way for success?

Nobody believed I could become a swan  
in a world of pigeons